

Contributed

PROOF TEXT REVISION.

Having been in touch with the work of the present Proof Text Committee from the beginning, the writer feels a more than common interest in the critical attitude which has at last developed towards the decision of the committee on a question which is preliminary and fundamental to their work, a question which they were left to decide for themselves without the least help from the church at large. We can not but feel a certain amount of sympathy with the hesitant attitude manifested towards making what appears at first sight a specific endorsement of the American Revision contained in the announcement that the committee "has followed the American Revised Version as to genuineness, interpretation and relevancy." Minutes, 1908, p. 115. But it seems to the writer that at the present stage of the work the criticism, if such it may be considered, is premature, since the rule was never intended to mean what it has been taken to imply. Properly considered it means no more than that the text of the revised version has been taken as a guide in deciding whether or not a passage might be properly applied as a proof of any particular statement of the Confession. The fact that they asked to be directed which version to use in printing the texts, and in the absence of such instruction have decided to use the old version, shows that this is all the rule can mean. There can be no objection to such application of the rule, for it is clearly demanded by the requirements of accuracy, in the effort to present unquestionable proofs.

The writer examined with considerable care their work on the Confession of Faith, and was gratified and highly pleased with its superiority to the original proof-texts. The committee is to be commended for their painstaking care in the fitting of texts. The work of the Westminster Assembly's committee, hastily done as it was, will bear no comparison with it, as one can determine for himself by examination, noting how many texts had to be rejected as irrelevant, and others substituted. The church will never know how much labor has been involved in this work. But when the church by examination of the finished work comes to have some idea of its magnitude and importance it can not fail to appreciate that the committee has rendered a great service to the church.

But while inclined to defend the committee against any hasty or ill-considered criticism, we can not but think that the rule in question is open to a verbal criticism, and that they should have said "Revised Version" with "American" left off. The work of the revisers which really underlies the questions of genuineness and relevancy is one with which the American company had little or nothing to do, and therefore to speak of the American Revised Version in such connection gives the American revisers a credit to which they are not entitled, de-

priving those who are entitled to it, because a list of readings to be followed had of necessity to be prepared, and to these belongs the credit of deciding what the best scholarship demanded in the way of departure from the commonly received Greek text. The writer possesses an Oxford edition of the Greek text which is supposed to underlie the Revised Version, and which was issued more than twenty-five years ago as a companion of that version, and it has been used by the writer ever since he has been in the ministry. It deviates in only a few places from the latest form of the critical text by Westcott and Hort, as we know by personal inspection. It is formed upon the basis of Stephens' third edition, by placing the revisers' adopted readings in the text and the corresponding old readings in the margin, so that both texts can be at once seen. The editor of this text, E. Palmer, made free use of Scrivener's edition of Stephens' text, which exhibits the "points of difference from certain texts put forth by Beza, Elzevir, Lachman, Tregelles, and Tischendorf." Thus it will be seen how readily these various readings, with the help of Westcott and Hort, could be compared and the necessary critical data looked up from the large editions which contained the critical apparatus and decide for themselves which to adopt. A critical commentary such as that of Meyer places a good deal of this data in the hands of the ordinary reader who is diligent enough to look it up in his textual notes.

The Standard makes a statement which is very liable to be misunderstood when it asserts that the revisers "disclaimed a *textus receptus*." The indefinite article is erroneously substituted for the definite. There is no such thing as "a *textus receptus*," and has not been in the estimation of textual critics for a century and a half, or since Wetstein's edition of the New Testament in two folio volumes (1751-2) declared by Michaelis to be "of all the editions of the New Testament . . . the most important and the most necessary to all who are engaged in sacred criticism." The science of textual criticism is usually dated from Griesbach in 1770. It is therefore no new science, and the labors of those who have given their lives to the careful collation of the various uncial manuscripts which constitute the purest source for the determination of the true text, can not be ignored. It was an established science a hundred years ago, for Thomas H. Horne in the early part of the nineteenth century described a formidable array of manuscripts, and only one of very great value, the Sinaitic, has been discovered and collated since.

Again, the Standard says: "Internal evidences were largely relied on in settling conflicting views among leading authorities." The American revisers have possibly laid themselves liable to some such charge, but it can hardly lie against the English revisers who have so closely followed Westcott's text, which professes to be "based exclusively on documentary evidence, and on the most careful comparison of all the ancient sources of the

text as they have been collected and made available by the indefatigable diligence of former editors, especially of Lachman, Tischendorf and Tregelles."

The translation of "in" for "en" in connection with baptism, by the American revisers, is very likely a case of "purism" and pedantry rather than denominational bias. It is ignorance of Hellenistic Greek. But the American revisers have doubtless shown a rationalistic tendency, and in nothing does it crop out more decidedly than in the substitution of "Lord" for "God" in Acts 20: 28. Horne has given and carefully weighed all the critical data on this text, and is decidedly in favor of the ordinary reading, and this is adopted by Westcott and Hort and the English Revision. This variation is especially noticeable because this is one of the few places where they have deviated from the adopted text of the Revision. Another such instance of deviation is the retaining of the indicative mood instead of the subjunctive in Rom. 5: 1, which is the best attested reading. The internal evidence of the context as well as the double repetition of the word strongly favor the reading which the English revisers adopted.

Neither form of the Revision should be followed in 2 Tim. 3: 16. The verbal adjective surely can not be taken as a participle (Winer) when standing for the main predication. We do not believe that the Proof Text Committee should be deprived of this classic passage as a proof of inspiration, because the Revised Version in both forms has eviscerated the passage by making it ambiguous, in disregard of the laws of language. This shows that it is dangerous to lay down any cast iron rule, and that as the Confession itself holds, the Greek and the Hebrew must be the final appeal. The cases would be rare indeed where the fitting of texts in doctrinal matters would be appreciably affected by the latest results of sound textual criticism. We do not remember to have met with any such case in the work of the committee upon the Confession. It might in rare instances rule out a passage once used, but this would cause no difficulty in the ample support of any scripture doctrine.

We favor the striking out of the word "American" from the rule in question, on the ground of its false implication, allowing Revised Version of stand.

Luther Link.

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA.

This city of colonial activity and note is now assuming its winter bustle.

The Williamsburg Female Institute has opened with increased number of boarding pupils and the session bids fair to be a prosperous one.

William and Mary College has an unusual number of new students and the professors say they are remarkably well prepared in their studies. This shows the effect of high school improvement throughout the state.

Thursday evening, September 23, the Presbyterian pastor-elect, Rev. R. L. Walton, and his wife, entertained at their home on Francis street, the Presbyterian